



# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

## 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* illustrates a vernacular style of architecture which has Victorian Romanesque elements and demonstrates adaptation to suit the local climate and building methods. (Criterion 1.1)

The place is a landmark in Roebourne commanding a view over the town and surrounding district. (Criterion 1.3)

It contributes to the aesthetic quality of its environs through the use of materials reflecting the nature of the landscape. The simple design and local stone construction complements other public buildings in the Roebourne townscape. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church*, completed in 1895, is the oldest church in the Pilbara district and reflects the continuous presence of the Anglican Church in Roebourne since 1883, when the first church was built on the site. (Criterion 2.1)

The place has associations with many prominent North-West pioneering families, including the Withnell and Sholl families, and was consecrated by Bishop Riley, the third Bishop of Perth and later the first Archbishop. (Criterion 2.3)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* is highly valued by the local community for its religious and historical associations. The place is a site of commemoration of the settlers of the district. (Criterion 4.1)

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* contributes to the community's sense of place as a reminder of the nineteenth century development of Roebourne and the role of religion in that development. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* is the only Anglican church in the Wickham Parish and the only stone church in the Pilbara. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* is representative of the style, materials and building methods used during the nineteenth century in regions subject to cyclones. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

The place is maintained regularly and is in very good condition.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The apse and front porch were added to the original church building to enhance the function of the Church. The Church, which is still used, albeit only occasionally, for its original purpose, has operated continuously since 1895, and therefore retains a high degree of integrity.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Apart from the replacement of the concrete floors, window glazing and the wall opening for the apse, the original fabric has remained intact and has a high degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been researched and compiled by Laura Gray, heritage and conservation consultant, with some primary research by Gillian O'Mara, archival researcher. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* is a single-storey stone church building. It is located on the south-eastern slopes of Mount Welcome in Roebourne and commands a view over the town and surrounding districts. *Holy Trinity Anglican Church* was constructed in 1895, replacing the former 1883 church on the site which was destroyed by a cyclone in 1894.

Special regulations for the settlement of the North District were compiled by Governor Hampton as a result of the discovery of good pastoral land during explorations by Francis T. Gregory in 1861.<sup>1</sup> Among the first to take advantage of the north-western opportunities were Walter Padbury and John Wellard in 1863. The following year, John and Emma Withnell ventured to the north, on the recommendation of Emma's cousin, F. T. Gregory.<sup>2</sup> The Withnells established themselves on the banks of the Harding River at the foot of Mt Welcome.

In 1865, when the population was about 200, the Government Resident R. J. Sholl arrived to provide assistance in establishing the settlement. He set up camp close to the Withnells and arranged explorations to find a suitable site for the administrative centre of the north. After extensive explorations, he decided that their camp site at Harding River was most suitable for the townsite. Roebourne, the first gazetted town in the North-West, was proclaimed on 17 August 1866.<sup>3</sup> The town was named for J. S. Roe, the first Surveyor-General in the Swan River Colony.

Roebourne, the centre for 49 surrounding pastoral leases, was the main town in the fast developing North District with Cossack as its port. The town prospered and shops, services and hotels were established.<sup>4</sup>

On 14 June 1878, a public meeting was held in the Cossack Government School to discuss the establishment of a church in the North District. Sholl was voted to the position of Chairman. The meeting resolved 'that the following gentlemen be requested to act as nominators for the North district; viz Messrs Sholl, Pearse and Withnell.'<sup>5</sup> As a result of their efforts, Reserve 319 in Hampton Street was set aside for church purposes in December 1878.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Withnell Taylor, N. E. *A saga of the Northwest Yeera-muk-a-doo; The first settlement of north-west Australia told through the Withnell and Hancock families 1861-1890*. Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1987, pp. 16-22.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 22, 23, 30.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>5</sup> Centenary Commemorative Service 16 October 1983; 'The First 24 years Historical Summary'; Holy Trinity Church records, Roebourne, Minutes of meeting 14 June 1878.

<sup>6</sup> *Government Gazette* 1 December 1878, p.325.

Some years of fundraising followed before the cornerstone of St John's Anglican Church was laid on 23 May 1882. This commemorated the Building Committee; Robert J. Sholl JP(Chairman), E.H. Laurence (Govt. Resident), Alexander I. McRae, H.H. Hicks, John Withnell and William Hayton (Rector), and the architect, R.R. Jewell.<sup>7</sup>

Richard Roach Jewell became the Colony's Superintendent of Works in 1853, and had a great influence on public works in the colony until he retired in 1884. Construction of the first St John's Anglican Church was completed in 1883.

The church bell came from an iron hulled, barque rigged sailing ship, the *Aberlady*, built in 1875 in Scotland. In 1877, during a voyage from Hong Kong to New York, carrying general cargo, the ship was wrecked on the Alceste Reef in the Gaspar Straten (Straits). The Master and some of the crew arrived in Singapore within a few days and the wreck was offered for salvage and sold; 'As lies, where lies'. The bell from that ship came to be the church bell for St John's and the later *Holy Trinity Anglican Church*.<sup>8</sup>

St John's Anglican Church was destroyed by a cyclone in January 1894, and a building fund was again established by the Anglican community at Roebourne to raise funds for the construction of a new church on the site. By June 1894, the building fund held £350, but the building was estimated to cost £500. The vestry hoped for a donation from every resident in the North-West. Church men throughout the colony were asked to help in raising the required funds, so that the place would be free of debt on completion. A list of subscriptions received at that time, named many prominent and pioneering identities and businesses connected with the North-West; Dalgety & Co, Padbury Loton & Co, H. W. Sholl MLA, W. Sandover, W. H. Cusack, A. S. Roe, W. D. Cowan, Viveash, J. & W. Bateman, J. W. Church, E. T. Hooley, and the Meares and Leeds families.<sup>9</sup>

Building plans and specifications were prepared by a Mr Mirfin of Perth, who was also the builder.<sup>10</sup> The Church was designed with stone walls, iron window frames and a concrete floor to protect it against cyclones and prevent the ravages of white ants. To effect savings, the building materials except the local stone, were imported from Singapore.<sup>11</sup>

Construction of *Holy Trinity Anglican Church* commenced with the laying of the original foundation plate from St John's Church which was cemented into the corner stone of the new church on the third Sunday of Advent, on 9 December 1894. The inscription on the reverse side of the original foundation plate read 'A. M. D. G. 1894'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Centenary Commemorative Service 16 October 1983; 'The First 24 years Historical Summary'; Holy Trinity Church records, Roebourne, Minutes of meeting 14 June 1878.

<sup>8</sup> Correspondence from R. McKenna to Roebourne Shire, 1974.

<sup>9</sup> 'Roebourne Parish Church', c. 1895, held by Karratha Community Library Local History Collection.

<sup>10</sup> Discussion: Laura Gray with Archdeacon Bill Ross, on site, 1 May 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Centenary Commemorative Service 16 October 1983; 'The First 24 years Historical Summary'; Holy Trinity Church records, Roebourne.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam - To the greater glory of God.

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* was opened on 15 December 1895, and Bishop Riley consecrated it on 31 May 1896.

In 1897, a residency for the Rector was constructed in front of the Church, on the western side. The Rector lived in the rectory adjacent to the Church until 1920, when the Reverend Henry Wood Simpson ministered from Broome. In 1926, he moved to Roebourne as Archdeacon, and continued there until his death in 1946.

New seats and windows were installed in 1925, and in September the same year work commenced on the apse, at a cost of £350. Bishop Trower, the first Bishop in the North-West, celebrated the first Holy Communion in the apse on 13 December 1925, and consecrated it on 18 January 1927, by which time the front porch had been constructed. The stained glass window, central in the apse, was donated by Mr J. H. Church on 24 May 1931. The chancel screen was dedicated to the memory of William Shakespeare Hall.<sup>13</sup>

The decorative black wrought iron chancel screen is a mark of appreciation and respect for the early European settlers of the North-West, epitomised by William Shakespeare Hall. Hall was one of Gregory's exploration party in 1861. He managed the Withnell's pastoral leases after they settled in 1864, and worked on many other early pastoral stations in the district, including running a blacksmith shop at Cooya Pooya. Hall earned a reputation for assisting new arrivals in the region.

After the death of Archdeacon Simpson in 1946, there was no resident clergyman in Roebourne, although occasional services were conducted by Bishop John Frewer. In 1957, the Roebourne Parish became part of a Bush Church Aid supported parish, based in Port Hedland where the Rector lived.<sup>14</sup>

Since 1960, the Church has had a new concrete floor, power connected, a new organ installed, and the altar has been painted. A pulpit from Christ Church in Geraldton was installed in 1963.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1960s, with the establishment of the iron ore industry in the Pilbara, the new towns of Wickham, Karratha and Dampier emerged. In 1967, *Holy Trinity Anglican Church* passed into the care of the Rector at Dampier, within the newly formed Dampier Parish.<sup>16</sup>

In 1974, the Parish name was changed to West Pilbara, and subsequent boundary changes took place. Not having been used since 1946, the Roebourne rectory had fallen into disrepair and was demolished in 1975. In 1980, T.B. Williams, was the resident Rector and took up residence at Wickham. His successor was Reverend R.A.F McDonald appointed in 1981.<sup>17</sup>

In 1985, the West Pilbara Parish was divided to become two separate parishes; Karratha Parish including Dampier and Karratha, and the Wickham Parish

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 'The Church of the Holy Trinity Roebourne' compiled by Reverend Doncaster, n.d.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 'Parish of Wickham- Diocese of North West Australia' c. 1980.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 'The Church of the Holy Trinity Roebourne' compiled by Reverend Doncaster, n.d.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 'Parish of Wickham- Diocese of North West Australia' c. 1980.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

including Roebourne, Pannawonica and Port Samson. The first Rector for the Wickham Parish was Reverend R. A. F. McDonald.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1980s, during the time that Reverend McDonald was the Rector (1981-1987), the Army conducted exercises in the region and Army personnel fitted cyclone/vandal-proof screens to the Church windows.

New furniture replaced the original furnishings in the 1980s. Reverend W. A. Ross, Archdeacon of the Pilbara, describes the present seats, flower stand and altar design as typical church furniture of the north-west region.<sup>19</sup>

In December 1983, a commemorative service was held at *Holy Trinity Anglican Church* to celebrate the centenary of Anglican worship at the site. Over 100 people attended the celebration presented by Reverend McDonald and Pastor Dave Stevens of the Pilbara Aboriginal Church.<sup>20</sup>

In 1995, the centenary year of *Holy Trinity Anglican Church*, two lead light windows were installed as a commemoration of one hundred years of worship in the Church. Hilde and Richard Apel designed and created the stained glass windows which were dedicated on 30 November 1995 by Reverend W. A. Ross, Archdeacon of the Pilbara.

Regular Sunday services no longer take place in the Church. The Wickham residents attend services in that town, and the majority of the residents in Roebourne attend the Pilbara Aboriginal Church in Roebourne. Special services are conducted in the Church usually for Heritage Week, Easter, Christmas, and the occasional wedding.<sup>21</sup>

The Parish now includes the centres of Wickham, Roebourne, Pannawonica and Point Samson. *Holy Trinity Anglican Church* is the only Anglican Church in the Parish, in the oldest town in the Parish, where clergymen have been stationed since 1879.

### 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* is a single-storey stone construction on a level rise on the south-eastern slopes of Mount Welcome in Roebourne. It is a landmark from all entries into Roebourne. At the rear of the Church, the former ship's bell on a square timber post remains in place. The property backs (east) on to residences, while the northern and southern approaches comprise vacant scrub land which falls away from the rise. The front of the Church faces west over a broad expanse of red earth which includes the unformed Hampton Street.

*Holy Trinity Anglican Church* shows some characteristics of the Victorian Romanesque style of architecture.<sup>22</sup> The style indicators are demonstrated by the robust character of the traditional load bearing masonry walls, strongly modelled semicircular arched windows and the untrained labour requirement

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<sup>18</sup> ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Discussion: Laura Gray with Archdeacon Bill Ross, on site, 1 May 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Centenary Commemorative Service 16 October 1983; 'The First 24 years Historical Summary'; Holy Trinity Church records, Roebourne; *Robe River Roundup* December 1983.

<sup>21</sup> Discussion: Laura Gray with Archdeacon Bill Ross, on site, 1 May 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, p. 45.

of the construction. The siting of the Church on high ground is also consistent with the style.

The place is constructed from local stone laid in a random pattern, pointed and tucked, with composite concrete block quoined corners. The base of the walls forms a stone plinth around the perimeter. The front and rear walls form a parapet which is rendered and rounded along the gables. The gabled roof is clad with colorbond cladding which recently replaced the former corrugated iron, and it has cyclone ties in place. The metal cyclone tie bars are not compatible with the roofing material which is deteriorating.

The faceted apse at the rear, added in 1925, is rendered on the exterior, and the roof is hipped and faceted. The front porch, added in 1926, has a gabled roof at a lower level than the main church roof, and the plinthed walls only rise as high as the church window sills. Painted timber work supports the porch roof, with some detailed curved timber in the porch gable infill which has a simple cross above it, as does the gable ridge at the front and the rear.

The arched double entry doors are metal with a huge ornate cast iron lock and appropriately proportioned key.

Wire mesh cyclone/vandal proof screens have been screwed in place over all the church windows. The vertical format 12 pane leadlight windows, installed in 1925, are arched at the top and modelled into the recess of the substantial stone walls. Six evenly spaced windows are in place along each side of the Church, with two on each front and back wall.

The interior walls of the Church are rendered and painted white. The ceiling is lined on the rake with white painted mini orb and felt lining. The iron tie rods of the roof truss system are exposed, and ceiling fans have been installed at the junctures of the trusses.

An original decorative black wrought iron chancel screen spans the width of the Church. It forms three archways with the central archway higher, signalling the entry to the apse. Part of the original back wall has been removed to form a rendered Gothic arch leading into the faceted apse which has a window in each facet, although only the central window is stained glass.

The windows each side of the apse recess, on the rear wall, are modern (1995) stained glass windows depicting religious scenes incorporating local landscape and fauna features.

The remainder of the windows display their colours to the interior, with each panel of the window actually being four lead light panels of alternate orange and green squares of glass. The lower portion of the window has a central pivot to open, and the external screen does not restrict that action. The windows are recessed and modelled on the interior.

The original concrete floor was replaced in 1960 with the existing concrete floor. A brass plaque commemorates William Shakespeare Hall.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

Centenary Commemorative Service 16 October 1983, 'The First 24 years Historical Summary'. Holy Trinity Church records, Roebourne.



## **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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